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forms of the traditions which different readers had heard is an intelligible process ; it is one to which most people are prone. Thus the identity of the saying that no particle of the Law should perish for all time with that current in the Oral Tradition of the Jews was obvious ; some (as we see from the printed collections of the Oral Tradition) had heard it with *letter*, some with *yod*, some with *stroke* ; they had no scruple about inserting in their copies what they supposed to be correct.

The transitions of verse 17 (if the above account is correct) involved much more, and resemble more nearly those from Matthew v. 17 to Luke xvi. 17, of which an explanation has been attempted above. Here there were conflicting theories of the Saviour's mission, and these affected the form wherein recorders and copyists reproduced what were supposed to be His words.

D. S. MARGOLIOUTH.

THE ATTITUDE OF GOD TO SIN.

IN treating of sin and its forgiveness we must bear well in mind that we are involved in a religious discussion, not one purely moral. Even to raise the question of pardon is to enter a sphere where religious is unmistakably distinguished from ethical experience. Stoicism, to take one example, is chiefly a high type of philosophical ethics, hence the Stoic is not specially troubled by our problem. But wherever specific religion has lived and moved, the reality of Divine pardon has been a matter of life and death.

Otto's remarkable book, *Das Heilige*—the most striking theological work issued in Germany during the war—brings this out in original and arresting fashion. In religion,

he points out, God has always been felt to have the first and the last word. Awe is an absolutely cardinal element in the pious mood. The devotee bends head and heart before the object of worship with a sense of creaturely self-abandonment. Just because the thought of God is realised as the thought of something with heights and depths in it that none can fathom, something that alone is sublime and great, the truth is not that we have religion, but that religion has us. To use Otto's special vocabulary, the Divine or *numinosum* (from *numen*) is immediately known as possessing two vital aspects, the *tremendum* and the *facinosum*, the one evoking godly fear, the other responded to in trustful surrender. The believer, with his sinful heart, is aware that to him God is saying both things, "Depart from Me," and "Come unto Me." The feeling of guilt, far from being incidental, is, in every actual faith known to history, a constitutive part of experimental piety. Thus, while religion is not morality and every attempt to reduce it to terms exclusively or even chiefly moral must fail, it is never apart from morality; there is always morality in it. The sense of obligation to Deity is never absent. And this sense uniformly appears in an indissoluble bond with the two basal feelings of religion—reverence and trust. It points both to the *numen tremendum* and the *numen facinosum*. Believers hear alike the solemn voice that bids them bow and adore, and the still small voice urging them to trust and love. Also they know that in both respects they have come short.

These descriptions read as if they had been taken from Christianity, but in fact they apply to all religions in their measure. The living thought of God (or gods) has invariably been accompanied by the sense that men are beholden to God, socially and individually. This tie is at first conceived as being mainly ritual; the votary's chief duty is to worship.

And, as far back as we can trace the religious tradition, this sense of obligation has had beside it a penitent or foreboding awareness that the obligation has been imperfectly fulfilled. None has ever been able to pay fully the owed honour and service. The Divine claim is so comprehensive, so deep-reaching, that, by man as he is, it cannot be completely met. This failure to implement what is due comes to consciousness as felt sin and guilt; subsequently, and in a more or less intense degree, there is "a certain fearful looking for of judgment." For sin entails punishment, which can be averted by the mercy of heaven and by no other conceivable agency. It is to Divine forbearance and compassion alone, and nowhere else, that men appeal to overlook trespass, cover guilt, and remove fear. Even at the level of nature-religions these things are so; when ethical faiths emerge, the meaning of all is deepened.

In the field of moral religion, where Christianity rules, we find ourselves confronted in a new manner by the absolute distinction of right and wrong. The distinction, it is felt, is one not so much acknowledged or established by God as rather involved in His being what He is; at each point the Divine action is characterised by the presence and operation of inviolable moral principles. God, for the Christian mind, is more than the moral order, the moral law alive; but we cannot conceive of Him at all except as existing in a moral universe and acting under moral conditions. Thus, when He forgives sin, the thing is not done by leaving moral realities behind. He would not be more Divine if He dealt with sin as trivial, merely letting the sinner off; He would cease to be God. The consciousness of being forgiven rests on the presupposition that in the forgiven life something existed at war with the Divine nature, which could not be ignored. The holiness of God

must react upon it with a gravity echoed, not always faintly, by the man's own conscience.

The inconceivable evil of sin, the infinite need for Divine interposition, is revealed by the circumstance that no one ever yet gained the consciousness of pardon just by hard thinking. No great religious biography can be named where a man escaped from the sense of guilt by arguing himself out of it. Sin so exceeds in unworthiness that logic can see no way out. The problem it creates is one which cannot be formulated, much less resolved, by the instrumentality of dialectic. The utmost that bare logical thinking can effect in this region is to certify that God is absolute, that He is inescapable, and that He must infallibly crush the life which takes the path of antagonism to His will. Nevertheless, as Christians know, this very thing which the sinner's conscience, and his logic-too, declare to be impossible, actually takes place. The sinner is forgiven. The barriers fall, and the man who had seen no gateway of entrance anywhere passes into the fellowship of God and has the witness within himself that he is the Father's pardoned child. Indeed, the wondering gratitude in which Christian men, as they unload their hearts, often speak of the boon of pardon, bears an indirect testimony to the magnitude of the obstacles which were like to prove insurmountable. When, in adoring praise, the Apostle writes: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, in letting us be called children of God," in the background of his thought we catch sight of the receding shadow of sin, that awful power with which even God grapples in strife and pain. After the Armistice, when the war was fairly won and our minds were dwelling with quickened feeling on the horrors we had escaped, a *Times* leader-writer quoted with insight two lines from a child's hymn:

None of the ransomed ever knew
How deep were the waters crossed.

The sacrifice of the brave who died—its intensity, its tragedy, its darkness of anguish, all that was undergone in Flanders that the rest might live—this we can never learn. It must always be hid from our eyes. But just this elusive greatness of the sacrifice points to the appalling character of the enemy's power and its menace. Similarly, the thankfulness of forgiven men, as they look back and draw breath as reconciled sons of God, indicates the horror of that sin which would have overwhelmed us but for the love of God. *Nondum considerasti quanti ponderis sit peccatum*, says the interlocutor in Anselm: "You have not yet noted the weight of sin." The words have echoed in the Christian ear, judging all facile theories.

In the next place, we note the obvious but easily forgotten truth that the forgiveness of God involves His prior condemnation. The God of the Bible is such that with Him evil cannot dwell. [Psalm xcix. ends with the words, "For the Lord our God is holy," and the final adjective rings through the mind: it is with a holy God that we have to do. Christianity will not have to recast its idea of God as a result of the past eight years. Lord Haig, in his last despatch, declared that this war had brought to light no new principles of strategy; so the preachers of our new time will continue to proclaim that God is love, and to glory in the thought. But some of us will have to reconsider the meaning of Love. When we look out across Europe, recalling the industrial and international self-worship out of which the war came, we find a new significance in the familiar verse, "Our God is a consuming fire." The Divine love, whatever else it be, is such that it ordains for sin an unspeakable consummation. "Sin, when it is full-grown,

brings forth death"—that is the epitaph on certain pre-war ideals. What does God think of it all? What must He think of it, if He has any thoughts?

Every forgiven man knows part of the answer. He knows that the sin which God pardons He must first condemn. It is no mere helpless metaphor to speak of Him as feeling that intense aversion to evil which is the other side of goodness. His wrath is no illusion. He could not love the right and not be angry with wrong. He is utterly like Jesus Christ, and Christ is shown to us in the Gospels as manifesting an indignation about which there could be no mistake. When this is denied in the name of Christianity, I like to recall an incident in the history of British philosophy which has something very refreshing about it. Dean Mansel had argued that the attributes of God are unknowable by us. We cannot understand what Wisdom, Justice, Mercy, Love are, as they exist in God. The infinite goodness ascribed to Him is not the goodness which we know and love in our fellows, only higher infinitely in degree; it is different in kind and of another quality altogether. John Stuart Mill was roused by this. "Language," he wrote, "has no meaning for the words Just, Merciful, Benevolent, save that in which we predicate them of our fellow-creatures; and unless that is what we intend to express by them, we have no business to employ the words. If in affirming them of God we do not mean to affirm these very qualities, differing only as greater in degree, we are neither philosophically nor morally entitled to affirm them at all." Then he sums up his argument. "If, instead of the 'glad tidings' that there exists a Being in whom all the excellences which the highest human mind can conceive, exist in a degree inconceivable to us, I am informed that the world is ruled by a being whose attributes are infinite, but what they are we cannot learn, nor what are the principles of his

government, except that 'the highest human morality which we are capable of conceiving' does not sanction them : convince me of it, and I will bear my fate as I may. But when I am told that I must believe this, and at the same time call this being by the names which express and affirm the highest human morality, I say in plain terms that I will not. Whatever power such a being may have over me, there is one thing he shall not do : he shall not compel me to worship him. I will call no being good, who is not what I mean when I apply that epithet to my fellow-creatures." ¹

This is a passage it is always pleasant to quote, and the moral it yields is plain. We have no right to speak of the *love* of God, unless that term, taken as a compendious description of the highest goodness, means in a loftier degree what it means as applied to our human associates. And should we dream of calling a man good or loving whom we considered incapable of anger at wrong-doing ? Surely just here is to be found one of the difficulties felt by earnest, but not perhaps clear-headed people, when they are urged to forgive an injury. They hesitate, because pardon looks like a confession that their anger was reprehensible. But they know, without reasoning, that in the circumstances anger was not only permissible but obligatory. Lack of indignation at wickedness is a sign, not simply of a poor nature, but of positive unlikeness to Jesus Christ. As it has been put : "There are evil things against which our first and surest safeguard is the instinctive reaction of the soul in righteous resentment. The man in whom they evoke no quick repulsion, who is not moved to a sudden heat by them, is dead while he lives. It is not his virtue, but his vice, that he is superior to passion." Unless we sophisticate ourselves with a theory, we all feel this. Intentional

¹ *Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy* (3rd Ed.), pp. 122-4

discourtesy, the calculated ruin of purity, an act of cruelty to a child—the man is not to be envied who can look on calmly when such things are done. Doubtless, for beings like us it is very hard to be angry, and not sin ; but we must not turn this into a proof of the incompatibility of wrath with Holy Love.

Ritschl, then, did theology an ill turn when he argued that the wrath of God is no present fact, but only a future contingency. It stands, in his view, for God's intention to destroy at last those who persistently reject His love and place themselves, without excuse and without change, in antagonism to His Kingdom. In passing, it may be remarked that if Ritschl dislikes the thought of wrath because of its incongruity with love, there is a difficulty in understanding how it can ever become congruous with it. We ought, therefore, to say not only, No such thing exists as the wrath of God, but, No such thing will ever exist, now or hereafter. On the other hand, if it be conceded that God's wrath will or may be a reality one day, why should it not exist now, provided that its object exists ?

Of course Ritschl has to own that his theory is, at least *prima facie*, out of touch with the Christian mind. Those whom God has appointed to eternal life, he says, can never at any time be objects of His anger ; but they undoubtedly think they are. And this is unavoidable, since their thought is conditioned by time ; in point of fact, however, they are wrong. It may seem as if God were now angry with the sinner, and again at peace with him, but it is only seeming. The familiar hallucination is dispelled by the theologian, who comes in to demonstrate the sheer incompatibility of love and wrath. Anyone can see that Ritschl should be the last person to argue like this. Much of his energy was spent in turning speculative rationalism out of theology and installing in its place the Christian conscio-

ness, fed by the Gospel ; and his argument about love and wrath is a plain infidelity to that principle. For Christians feel that both are real in God, the love and the wrath. Indeed, it would not be much of an exaggeration to say that it is only when we are not very indignant with our own sin that the indignation of God becomes doubtful. He is the enemy of cruelty, falsehood, uncleanness ; He reacts against them with feeling of an absolutely ethical kind ; and every philosophical argument used to deny this, on the ground that it involves anthropomorphism, is an equally good argument for denying His love as well. We have only to persist in this line of thought and we shall totally dissipate strong faith in the Living God, whose relations to us are active and personal.

It is occasionally proposed to escape from difficulty by saying that God is angry, not with sinners, but with sin. It certainly would be pedantic to condemn this formula in a sermon, or in fireside talk. We meet with it in Whittier's hymn :—

Thou judgest us : Thy purity
Doth all our lusts condemn ;
The love that draws us nearer Thee
Is hot with wrath to them.

But what is accepted gladly from the poet may none the less need scrutiny. In point of fact, there is no such thing as sin apart from a sinner, any more than pleasure could be real, abstractly or in the air, in separation from a pleased consciousness. The one reality in the case is the sinful person. Moreover, to be angry with a thing is a moral absurdity. The man who kicks spitefully at the stool over which he tripped in the dark has for the moment put his better feelings out of action. Anger, the anger of moral love, is only possible towards moral beings ; if, therefore, God is angry at all, it is with sinners that His anger has to do.

To go on to a third point : the sin which God forgives, He has before not merely condemned but punished. This holds true of every sin, and not only of a certain class of sins. All sins are punished by God, and they are punished in order to their being forgiven. The punishment of sin is an essential precondition of reconciliation, whether between God and man or between man and his neighbour ; and the denial of this is traceable really to an external or hedonistic view of what punishment is.

We are nowadays familiar with the argument that it is radically unworthy of God to punish human beings, no matter what their guilt. That would amount to making rewards and punishments parts of the Christian religion, with a consequent degradation of its morality. Virtue is its own reward. In reply to this, it must be pointed out that we are now fairly unanimous in regarding human life, in its religious aspect, not, in the language of a former age, as a scene simply of probation, but as a place of education. Now, the educational value of punishment may be, and actually is, enormous. Plenty of educationalists have held that children should not be punished physically ; I have never known of any serious teacher who thought they should not be punished at all. As Dean Rashdall has put it : " What parent or schoolmaster would say to a child, ' My good child, enlightened philosophers are agreed that conduct motived by fear of punishment and hope of reward is worthless ; therefore henceforth I shall leave you to be guided by your own innate sense of right and wrong. I will not corrupt the purity of your will by threats or promises. Your virtues shall be their own reward : your misdeeds shall never interfere with your pleasures or cause the withdrawal of my favour.' What child would flourish morally under such treatment as this ? And yet," he continues, " it would be a very cynical view of human

nature to suppose that the average schoolboy is actuated by no motive higher than selfish hope or fear. He has higher motives, but he requires to be aided in his efforts at self-conquest by lower ones. And after all, most of us are a great deal more like children than it is fashionable among philosophers to believe—at least, in our moments of weakness and strong temptation.” Punishment, that is to say, is a part of kindness in dealing with immature characters, and I cannot imagine any one quietly contemplating his own past in the light of faith without the willing confession that repeatedly the fatherly chastisements of God have gone to school him in adhesion to righteousness for its own sake. It is true, the whole conception of Divine punishment has been scouted in the name of Jesus’ teaching that from suffering we must not infer the sufferer’s sin. But let it not be forgotten that the same Jesus who said : “Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents, that he was born blind,” said also : “Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon thee.” To ascribe vindictive fury to God is pagan ; to believe that His love corrects our faults by pain is part of Christianity.

Older writers were accustomed to divide the punishments of God into two classes, natural and positive ; and this classification is still influential with popular thought. Natural penalties were defined as flowing from sin by ordinary causation—for example, disease due to habitual intemperance, or loss of reputation owing to a known act of fraud. Positive penalties were such as by their striking and abnormal character led the onlooker to trace them to the direct action of God. But the distinction is quite unreal. All chastisements of sin are positive, in the sense that God wills them ; and the fact that their incidence is mediated by natural causes does not alter this in the least. The system of causation is itself a Divine appoint-

ment. It is an order which, while it is the completest example of law, is never, in any part or at any moment, separated from the living will of God. Men, of course, are tempted to dissociate the penalties of sin from Divine volition because so often they seem to arrive with automatic regularity. They miss God's voice because, in certain spheres, He speaks with a uniformity that makes no distinctions. This, however, does not mean that He is ever indifferent to evil, or inactive with respect of it ; it means that His opposition to evil is so intense that He has actually formed the world on such lines that it infallibly reacts against the wrong-doer.

But we stop on the mere fringe of experience if we speak only of penalties that affect our natural or outward life. The final truth lies deeper. Sin has its punishment in our own soul, in our relations to others, supremely in our relations to God. To begin with our personal life, there is first the stultification of the evil will. In sin we aim at happiness, which by the path of sin we can never reach ; nay, after every fresh effort, we are farther from our goal than ever. Sin, in MacTaggart's phrase, is like drinking sea-water to quench thirst. Again, there is punishment in the growing strength of wrong desire. Each bad choice graves deeper the path of tendency ; each fall is penalised by the added weakness with which men face the next temptation. Again, there is punishment in loss of self-respect. After sinning, we are under the necessity of despising ourselves. Not least among the reprisals of the moral nature of things is the wound left in memory and in our estimate of our own being. Thus when in the parable of the prodigal Jesus is picturing unreserved pardon and acceptance, He touches for a moment on the truth that the wanderer's self-respect is given back to him. " But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him."

The sorest punishment of sin, however, is the sinner's isolation, alike from God and from man. To sin and to break up fellowship are one and the same thing. Whether it be lust or vanity or self-will, sin essentially consists in shutting up our life within the limits of our own ego. We banish ourselves from the company of our fellows and of our Father. Life is contracted into the narrow sphere of self, and the proper and necessary self-affirmation and activity of the individual is perverted to become an absolute standard of value. Just because this self-worship is constitutive of all sin, it follows that the sinner, in proportion as he falls under its power, loses the capacity to escape from self and share the life of others. His ability to have personal fellowship is destroyed. Shadows fall and drape the soul in darkness. All consequences of sin are minor compared with this ; those that touch the body hardly count when put beside the penalty of alienation from God and from our neighbour. To lose communion with God is what chiefly matters. Of this, the proof is one simple fact—when a man faces God in Christ, responding to the love manifest in the Cross, he is ready to say, Give me back fellowship with Thyself and with my brother at my side, and other chastisements I will bear in patience.

It follows that the very grace and freeness of Divine pardon must not be turned into an argument for the comparative unimportance of sin. This occasionally is done. It has been contended that the fact that God deems it possible to forgive sin at all nullifies, ultimately, its real gravity. The idea of pardon, that is, is utilised to undermine the idea of sin itself. If this were sound, it would mean that to proclaim the forgiveness of sins was really to tell men that sin is a purely relative thing, which God can and does regard as merely a stage on the way to perfection, or as the unavoidable manifestation of human frailty and

error. Such a dilution of the thought of sin would obviously make forgiveness a superfluity. We have no need to be forgiven for defects which are the natural and appointed elements of finite imperfection.

It is clear, then, that the ideas of forgiveness and sin vary together. If we allow any validity to the conception of Divine pardon, we must own that the pardoned sin is condemnable. It is so in and by itself ; it is not merely so in our mistaken view ; still less can it be the case, as Schleiermacher's curious theory puts it, that this mistake of ours is encouraged by God in order to prepare us for reconciliation. If we are not to trust our penitential intuition that our sin lies under the Father's judgment, and deserves so to lie, there seems no reason why we should ever trust our minds at all. We know perfectly that we can only receive forgiveness in so far as we have owned our sin *as* sin and not mere misfortune, and we further know that this verdict of ours is an echo or counterpart of the verdict of God Himself. To be offered pardon for any act or abstention which we regarded as innocent would not pacify conscience, but mystify and offend it. By His Gospel for a world of sin, therefore, God declares to us not merely that sin rests under condemnation, but that nothing the sinner can do will ever make it good. It is a thing so real, so dark that only three modes of Divine treatment are possible—to judge it, to bear it, to forgive it freely. All these are present in the great act and experience of God which we call the Atonement.

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